

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 IO-03 AF-04 INR-05

CIAE-00 L-01 SAJ-01 PRS-01 /043 W

----- 021927

R 171822Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3725

INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

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AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

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USMISSION IAEA VIENNA

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 17086

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: GW, SF, NATO, MPOL, PARM

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SUBJECT: FRG/SOUTH AFRICAN RELATIONS AN INCREASING

PROBLEM

REF: BONN 17009 AND PREVIOUS

1. THE RALL AFFAIR AND ITS AFTERMATH IS TAKING ANOTHER UGLY TURN THAT DIRECTLY THREATENS DEFMIN LEBER'S POSITION AND PRESENTS CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT WITH DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROBLEMS.

2. THE GERMAN PRESS BROKE THE STORY OCTOBER 17 THAT THE NEXT ISSUE OF "DER SPIEGEL" WILL CONTAIN A COPY OF A LETTER IN WHICH SOUTH AFRICAN AMBASSADOR SOLE REPORTED TO HIS GOVERNMENT THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED RALL'S TRIP PERSONALLY WITH DEFMIN LEBER. THIS STORY FOLLOWS RALL'S FORCED RETIREMENT AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, LEBER'S REPORT TO SCHMIDT AND THE REST OF THE CABINET THAT HE HAD NOT KNOWN ANYTHING ABOUT RALL'S TRIP.

3. A SENIOR FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIAL HAS TOLD THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR THAT THE LETTER FROM SOLE TO HIS GOVERNMENT IS GENUINE, AND THAT SOLE DID CLAIM TO HAVE SPOKEN TO LEBER ABOUT RALL'S TRIP. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS EVEN RECEIVED A COPY OF THE LETTER UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES THAT STRONGLY SUGGEST A PLANNED OPERATION. HE ADDED THAT THE FRG HOPES SOUTH AFRICA WILL WITHDRAW ITS AMBASSADOR WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS BEFORE THE FRG MUST FORMALLY REQUEST HIS DEPARTURE.

4. THE FRG OFFICIAL SAID THAT THE WHOLE OPERATION AGAINST GERMAN-SOUTH AFRICAN RELATIONS IS BEING CONDUCTED WITH SUCH PROFESSIONAL SKILL THAT IT APPEARS TO BE MANAGED BY SEASONED OPERATORS, PERHAPS EAST GERMAN. THE OPERATION APPEARS TO HAVE THE DOUBLE PURPOSE OF RUPTURING FRG RELATIONS WITH AFRICA (LIKE THE GUINEA OPERATION OF SEVERAL YEARS AGO) AND OF FORCING LEBER'S RESIGNATION. SUCH A RESIGNATION WOULD PRESENT CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT WITH AN ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE DILEMMA; TO REPLACE LEBER WITH A STRONG DEFENSE MINISTER WOULD MEAN ALIENATING THE SPD LEFT WING JUST BEFORE A NATIONAL ELECTION; TO REPLACE LEBER WITH A WEAK

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DEFENSE MINISTER WOULD RISK A BREAK WITH THE FDP AND WOULD CAUSE SERIOUS CONCERN AMONG THE ALLIES.

5. THE FRG PRESS SPOKESMAN ANNOUNCED OCTOBER 17 THAT AMBASSADOR SOLE WOULD MEET WITH FONOFF STATE SECRETARY GEHLHOFF AND THAT THE WHOLE AFFAIR "WOULD BE ENDED SOON."

6. THE PRESS SPOKESMAN'S REMARKS MAY INDICATE THAT THE FRG ASKED FOR SOLE'S RECALL. SCHMIDT MUST SUPPORT LEBER OR LOSE HIM, AND SCHMIDT WOULD MUCH RATHER LOSE THE AMBASSADOR, EVEN WITH THE CONSEQUENT FALLOUT, FOR THE REASONS CITED IN PARA 4.

HILLENBRAND

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL RECALL
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 OCT 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: SmithRJ
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BONN17086
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750361-1097
From: BONN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751044/aaaabnbz.tel
Line Count: 121
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 75 BONN 17009
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: SmithRJ
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <11 APR 2003 by SmithRJ>; APPROVED <02 OCT 2003 by SmithRJ>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FRG/SOUTH AFRICAN RELATIONS AN INCREASING PROBLEM
TAGS: MPOL, PARM, PFOR, PDIP, GE, SF, NATO, (SOLE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006